

Approaches to International and Global History

History G8930

Fall 2009

T 11-12:50

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How can we research, read and write about international and global historical processes? National and regional frameworks have proven to be fertile frameworks for historical analyses, but their success has made it difficult to develop an understanding of transnational and global historical processes. Thus, historians who wish to write international and global histories must often be pioneers in the development of methodologies, questions to frame their work and historiography. Fortunately, there are already many good works from which to launch this journey.

Some questions we will focus on include:

- What are the differences between global, comparative, international, transnational, regional and local approaches to history? What are their strengths and limitations, and how do they fit (or fail to fit) with and illuminate each other?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of different temporal and geographic scales of analysis?
- What are questions and debates in world and international history that can frame research projects? How can one develop well-grounded and detailed historical research that crosses familiar geographic units? How can we draw on existing historiographies and debates, and make our work significant to those issues?
- What are implications of the fact that the modern historical profession was developed in the North Atlantic?

We will approach these questions mostly through the reading of historical works, although some theoretical readings are included. We will begin discussions of each work by trying to understand what tasks the authors have set for themselves, and the extent to which they have achieved their goals. We will also frequently return to a broader discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and how we might develop our own issues and approaches to research.

Readings

The following readings are available at Book Culture and Butler reserve:

David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*

Richard Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers*

Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*

John Lewis Gaddis, *Landscapes of History: How Historians Map the Past*

Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-colonial Nationalism*

Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*

Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*

Short readings will be available in the Class Files section of Courseworks:

<https://courseworks.columbia.edu/>

Course Requirements

Short Paper:

Write a critique of at least 2500 words of Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*. Does the book succeed in obtaining its objectives? Does the book make any problematic assumptions? Are there any particular strengths or limitations in the approach proposed by the author? Due 4 PM, Friday, October 9.

Long Paper:

Address an issue of interpretive tension based on the readings, both in class plus one or two extra readings from outside of this class. The “interpretive tension” can be a debate we discussed in class, or an attempt to relate some particular readings to your knowledge of broader historiography. Attempt to go beyond what the authors explicitly argue, and identify underlying issues and assumptions that constitute different methodologies or assumptions. Papers should focus on the problems of developing transnational or global histories. Questions you may like to use to frame the paper include: What is at stake in this debate (and do the participants rightly perceive what is at stake)? Why is this issue significant beyond a mere clash of scholarly ego? Is there a way to reconcile or transcend the differences (through empirical research or otherwise)?

Visit me in my office to discuss your ideas before writing.

The paper should be over 5000 words, and is due at noon, Tuesday, December 15

All papers should be sent to me as an email attachment (.doc or .rtf format). I will write comments on the document and return it to you in electronic form.

Responses

A 3-500 word reflection on each week's readings should be posted on the Discussion section of Courseworks (<https://courseworks.columbia.edu/> select "New Topic" and then the appropriate category) by 9AM on the day of class. The response should not summarize the readings, but should focus on the kinds of questions discussed in the syllabus introduction. In weeks with two or more readings, you can focus on one or two of the readings, or look at points of convergence and disagreement. What are the core issues at stake? Conclude each response with a question that you would like to ask the author. Please read comments posted by your classmates.

Review Synopses and Presentations

Each week, one student will be assigned to read and summarize published reviews of that week's readings and to post it on Courseworks. The summary should range from 1-2000 words, and include liberal citations from the reviews. The reviewer will also present his or her own evaluation of the book at the beginning of the class, and develop some questions to kick-off the discussion and keep it moving.

Grades:

The long paper will be weighted three times more heavily than the short paper in the final grade. Grading on the papers will be tough. Active participation in discussions, good effort in the responses and review synopsis, and timely completion of all written work will raise your final grade above that of the papers.

Schedule

Sept. 8

Welcome

Sept. 15

Scale, Evidence and Argument

David Christian, "World History in Context," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 4. (2003): 437-458.

John Lewis Gaddis, *Landscapes of History*

Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," from his *Tropics of Discourse*, 81-99,

Sept. 22

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*

Sept. 29

Richard Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers*

Oct. 6

Early Globalizations

Janet Lippman Abu-Lughod, "The World System in the Thirteenth Century: Dead-End or Precursor?" In Michael Adas, ed., *Islamic and European Expansion*, 75-102.

C.A. Bayly, "From Archaic Globalization to International Networks, c. 1600-2000." In Bentley, Bridenthal and Yang, eds., *Interactions: Transregional Perspectives on World History* (2005), 14-29.

Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2, (2002): 391-428.

Jack Goldstone, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2, (2002): 323-90.

OCTOBER 9, 4PM. FIRST PAPER DUE

Oct. 13

World Systems Theory and Its Discontents

Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography*, 10-29, 113-43.

Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I*, pp. 301-57.

_____. *The Modern World-System II*, pp. 147-75

Steve Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," *American Historical Review* 93 (1988): 829-872.

Immanuel Wallerstein, "Comments on Stern's Critical Tests," *AHR* 93 (1988): 873-85.

Oct. 20

David Armitage, *Declaration of Independence*

Oct. 27

Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, 3-36, 41-53.

Antony Anghie, "Finding the Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law." *Harvard International Law Journal* 40 (1999): 1-80.

Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "Global Violence and Nationalizing Wars in Eurasia and America," *Comparative Studies Society and History* 38 (1996): 619-57.

ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY

Nov. 10

Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*

Nov. 17

John Meyer, "The Nation as Babbitt: How Countries Conform." *Contexts* 3 (2004): 42-7.

John Meyer, "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State," George Thomas, John Meyer, Francisco Ramirez and John Boli, *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual* (Sage, 1987), 41-70.

John Meyer, et al. "World Society and the Nation State," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 1 (1997): 144-81.

Immanuel Wallerstein, "The National and the Universal: Can There Be Such a Thing as World Culture?" In Anthony King, ed., *Culture, Globalization and the World-System* 1997 [1989], 91-106.

Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism." In *The Essential Wallerstein* [1988], 344-52.

Nov. 24

Erez Manela, *Wilsonian Moment*

Dec. 1

Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*

Final Meeting, Date to be determined

In conjunction with Matt Connelly's class, we will discuss both his *Fatal Misconception* and Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 12PM. FINAL PAPER DUE